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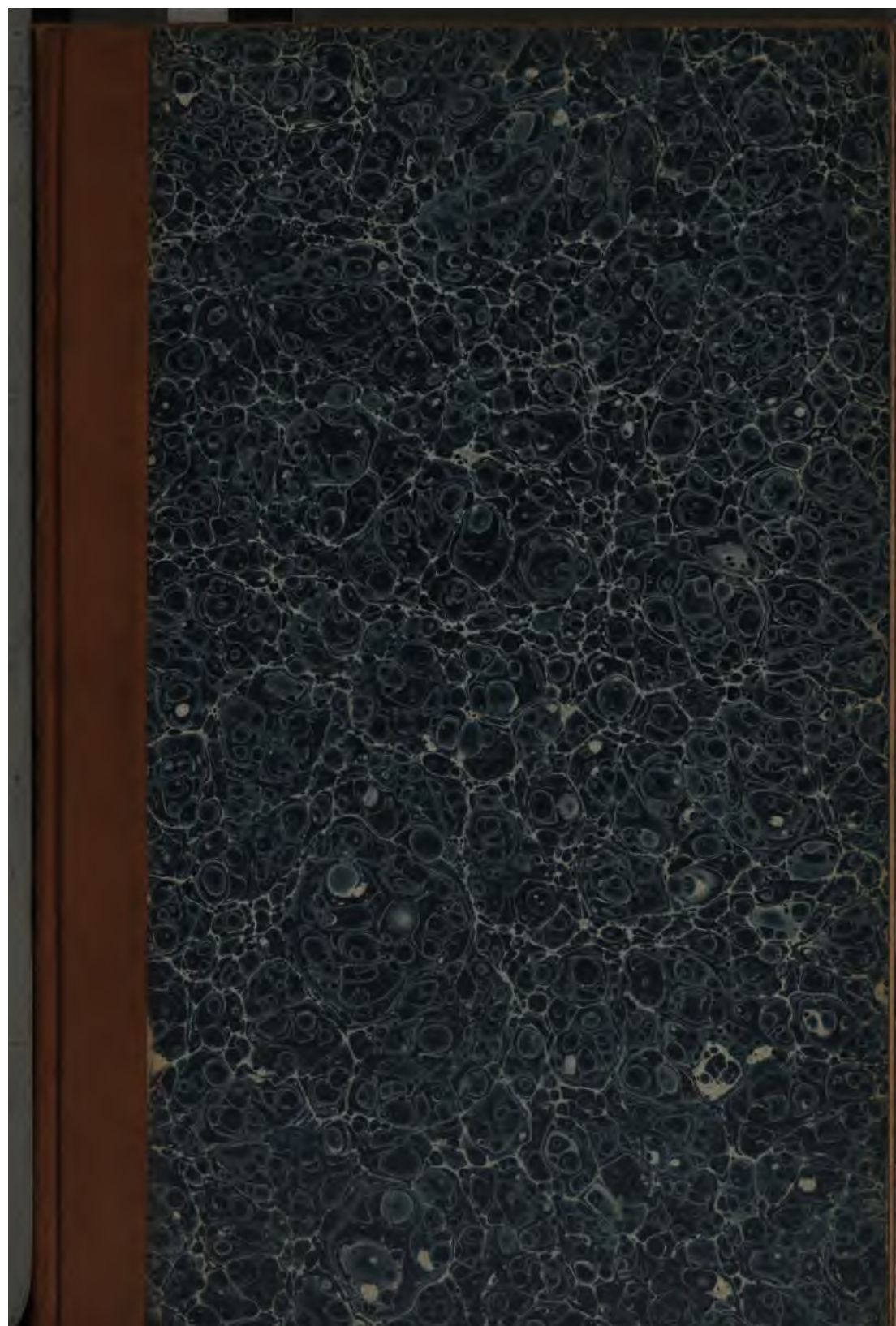
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**THE THREATENED FAMINE A DIVINE JUDG-
MENT FOR NATIONAL UNFAITHFULNESS.**

A S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF KENILWORTH,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCT. 25, 1846,

BY THE

**REV. E. R. EARDLEY-WILMOT, B. A.
VICAR.**

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THE THREATENED FAMINE.

PSALM cvii. 34.

“A fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.”

It is a hard thing, Brethren, to be an atheist: to go abroad into the beautiful walks of nature, and observing the construction and the purposes of the objects around us, to return home with the deliberate belief that there is no God. Creation is a living testimony against us, affording convincing evidence of the work of an Intelligent Mind: for “the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, even His eternal power and Godhead.”*

But *who* is an atheist? Is it only the man who, finding the belief of the existence of God inconsistent with his own wishes and plans of self-indulgence, forces his mind to the rejection of this truth? who, as the apostle expresses it, “does not like to retain God in his knowledge?”† Atheism of this kind, perhaps, is rare. But there may be a *practical* atheism, where the existence of

* Rom. i. 20.

† Rom. i. 28.

the Supreme Being is not denied; and it is difficult to draw the distinction between atheism *in heart* and atheism *in practice*. We are *practical* atheists when we overlook the providence of God; when we act and live as if things were produced by secondary causes; when we fail to observe God's moral government of the universe, and to perceive, in the control and direction of events, the instruments of His dealing with those over whom His moral government is exercised.

And if *this* be atheism, are there not many of us atheists? Common observation of the habits and expressed feelings of individuals confirm the truth, that atheism of this kind, offensive as it must be to God, is very prevalent; nay, that it is the character of very many of us, who would feel indignant at the thought of our christian principles being questioned.

Now the Psalmist in our text, as well as in the preceding and following verses, declares the providence of God; the control of the Supreme Being over the materials of creation; and *more*, that such control is exercised by the Divine Intelligence according to the uprightness or refraction of that creature, who alone, amid the wonders of His power, He has endowed with reason, made conscious of His government, and capable of a higher existence. The purport of the Psalm, indeed, is beautifully set forth in the argument which stands at the head of it—“*The Psalmist exhorteth the redeemed in praising God to observe His manifold providence over travellers, over captivess, over sick men, over seamen, and in divers varieties of life.*” And four times there is interspersed, at suitable intervals, a fervent call upon us to make the wonders and the goodness of God the subject of our praise:—“Oh! that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.”

Thus, in this revealed account of the manner of God's providence, the inspired Psalmist declares to us a principle upon which God acts in His moral government: "A fruitful land He turneth into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." This is God's way. He takes away the promise of the earth. He punishes the iniquity of the inhabitants of a land by sending amongst them what is called in Ezekiel* "the evil arrows of famine."

Let us, then, consider the text—

First, as a truth.

Secondly, as a truth applicable to ourselves.

As a truth, the language of the text is capable of the clearest proof. If indeed *there be a God*, it is reasonable to suppose that He *should thus act*. The supremacy of His being is inseparable from His attributes; and the truth of His attributes is inseparable from their exercise. If He made the world, He must know the world; and further, He must be concerned about the world. If He knows the world, He must know the transactions of the world. *He must know, for instance, man's sin in the world.* If holiness be a quality of Him, who made the world, the *sin of man must be very offensive to Him*; so that, if power be one of His attributes, it is not unreasonable to suppose that He will *punish sin*. For God carries on his moral government of the world. What are called the natural consequences of sin, are only part of that government. He is not a visible God.* "No man hath seen Him at any time, the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared him."† And though God is visible in Christ, and visible in the written will which we possess, still God carries on an invisible government of

* Ezekiel v. 16.

† John i. 18.

the world. And this invisible government is in a sense distinct from the written revelation of truth, yet so in harmony with it, that so far from the one contradicting the other, Revelation furnishes us with the statutes and ordinances of the Most High; with the very principles upon which He acts; and with His manner of dealing in the daily government of the universe. Of this the text is an example. It cannot, indeed, be denied, that God uses the very frame of His creatures as the instrument of His punishment: sickness, pain, and suffering; or the misery of the intelligent part of man's compound, the mind; or He afflicts them through the means of those daily blessings upon which they depend for sustentation, and for which they labour. It is difficult to conceive how otherwise His government could be carried on. We are compelled to feel, that though He is an invisible God, "we are at present under His government in the strictest and most proper sense;" and "that the whole course of nature is a present instance of His exercising that government over us."*

But the text, as a truth, is fully supported by scriptural example. It is true in a more extended as well as in a limited sense. "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when He hideth His face, who then can behold Him? whether it be done against a nation or against a man only."† We have only to call to mind the history of Sodom and Gomorrah to see an illustration of the text to a most fearful extent. When Lot in the day of his separation from Abram cast his eyes upon the country, "it was well watered everywhere, as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar."‡ It was sufficient that the inhabitants

* Butler's Analogy. † Job xxxiv. 29. ‡ Gen. xiii. 10

of that fruitful plain “were sinners before the Lord exceedingly.”* He stretched forth upon it in consequence the arm of His power. “He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground ;”† and so perpetual is the desolation, that even at the present day, travellers bear testimony to the fact, that “it remains a vast lake, so impregnated with noisome and sulphureous substances, that no fish will swim in it, and that scarce a bird will hover over it.”

You cannot, my brethren, be strangers to the fact, that in the inspired book of God’s truth, famine, or what the Psalmist calls the barrenness of a land, is ordered by Him, who ruleth in the heavens and the earth, as a punishment of the nation which presumes to reject and despise Him. The sin of David was so mixed up with the people over whom he ruled, that seven years’ famine was one of the three punishments from which he was to choose. And the same chastisement was called for in the days of Ahab. But why should we speak of the past ? Is there no existing verification of this manner of God’s dealing ? Let any man turn his eyes to that land, which to Abraham and his posterity was the fair and fertile subject of God’s promise. Its beauty and fertility had given rise to a scriptural proverb, expressive of its abundance and productiveness : it was “a land flowing with milk and honey.” In prophetic language it was “a delightsome land.” There is not a traveller, who has gone through the length and breadth of the land of promise, but bears testimony to its former state of cultivation and fruitfulness. Its great natural capabilities, indeed, are set forth by Moses :† “The land is not as the land of

* Gen. xiii. 13. † Gen. xix. 25. ‡ Deut. xi. 10, 11, 12.

Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot as a garden of herbs ; but the land is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven ; a land, which the Lord thy God careth for : the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." But visit it now. It is one waste of ruin. It lies in its desolation, a standing monument of the power and wrath of God. There is indeed a day coming, we know not how near, when "violence shall be no more heard in that land ;"* such a day of joy to God's dispersed Israel, that that land shall no more be termed desolate, but blessed by the returning presence of an acknowledged Saviour, it shall be literally *Immanuel's land*. But at this present moment, its languished vines, its forsaken pastures, its ruined villages, its scanty inhabitants, are the very filling up of that prophetic announcement of Isaiah,† "The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled, for the Lord hath spoken this word." It is emphatically a judgment-stricken land. And why ? For the sins of those whom God had borne from the midst of their enemies as upon eagles' wings ; redeeming them with a mighty hand and stretched out arm ; bringing them into the bonds of the covenant ; and imparting to them national blessings and privileges of a most exalted character. It was because they proved unfaithful to their trust ; lightly esteemed the precepts of God ; compromised His truth ; debased themselves by the admission of idolatry. In the figurative language of David, "they startled aside like a broken bow ;" till at length the God of nature, in a destructive storm of desolation and ruin, gave an awful response to His own word‡

* Is lx. 18.

† Is. xxiv. 3.

‡ Jer v. 9.

—“Shall I not visit for these things, and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” Do we ask, then, why has God done it? Let the prophet answer—“The Lord could no longer bear, because of the evils of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant as at this day.”* And may it not be, (which is a truth we would remember in the application,) that the very degree of God’s severity bears an exact proportion to the measure of His extended privileges? *Light, knowledge, grace*, whether enjoyed by a *nation* or an *individual*, as they increase responsibility, so, if resisted or abused, they aggravate guilt, and must of necessity entail the infliction of severer judgment. It is God’s rule applied to a people pre-eminently favoured:—“You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”† But however imperfect may be our knowledge of the manner and degree in which God is influenced in the infliction of His judgments, “a people scattered and peeled,”‡ are before us as an example of what an offended God will work upon a nation which rejects Him: and their land, upon which is stretched forth “the line of confusion” and “the stones of emptiness,” remains an irresistible testimony to the truth of David—“A fruitful land He turneth into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.”

II. And now is not this a truth applicable to ourselves?

My brethren, it is the Majesty of God that He is *unchangeable*. Every thing inferior to Him, with which we are acquainted, is changeable. Corruption and change

* Jer. xliv. 22.

† Amos iii. 2.

‡ Is. xviii. 2.

are, in this view, convertible terms. The incorruptible alone is *unchangeable*. The final state which God designs for the human race is an incorruptible one. Man will then be unchangeable. But it is the high Majesty of God, that in Himself, self-existent, underived, He is *unchangeable*. And what is true of God in His Being is true of God in His acts. If He be unchangeable in His nature, He is unchangeable in His moral government. His system, as we should say, is unchangeable. He is an eternal law to Himself. We do not say that God is unchangeable in such a way, that merited and threatened punishment may not be averted by timely penitence : that God cannot be moved to suspend that which holiness and justice equally dictate. Such a change, so characteristic of mercy and beneficence, is far from derogatory to His Majesty. But we mean that God in His moral government has one constant law by which He acts ; and is in this respect *unchangeable*. Thus His manner of dealing is the same now as when David uttered the language of the text. He still controls and directs the materials of the visible world ; and makes these, amongst other things, the instruments of His dealing with ourselves. Man in the esteem of God is important enough for this. Not so on account of any dignity and excellence of his own ; but because God designs in him the fullest exhibition of His glory ; to which end indeed was God manifest in the flesh : and to which end shall a redeemed and triumphant Church, composed of sinners amongst men, built in as lively stones, be presented as a chaste virgin to Jesus Christ : for “ of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom be glory for ever.”*

And if God be thus unchangeable in the mode of His

* Rom. xi. 36.

operations; in the systematic execution of His moral government; is it not in strict accordance with truth to say, that the visitations which influence for good or for evil, the temporal condition of the inhabitants of the earth, are the express manifestations of His mind; the orderings of divine wisdom; the dealings of an observant though invisible God, whether punitive or admonitory?—that however much man's indifference may disregard them, or man's atheism may deny them, or man's wisdom may account for them by secondary causes, the varied events of the world are the works of His hand. For if nature is a revelation of God, may not every alteration of what we perceive to be natural, speak in language as plain, and be as decisive an indication of the presence and power of the same unseen Intelligence?

Nor let us think that these observations are unnecessary. For why are we in practice such atheists? Why in our habits of thought, when smarting under some manifest judgment of God, are we so blind or so perverse, that instead of bowing in meek humility to the message of the Lord, we trace the evil under which we are suffering to some secondary agency? Come, my brethren, to facts. Throughout a great portion of the globe a severe affliction is experienced at the present moment. The fruit of the earth has failed. Gloomy records of a blighted and destroyed crop, and sad forebodings of consequent famine have been circulated from one to another amongst the nations of the earth. Who is a stranger to it? We know from our own experience on the spot that it is so: and the heart sickens at the daily accounts from one portion of our own country, which assure us of famine, and all its attendant horrors as already begun. Internal disorder and tumult, factions, murders, bloodshed, are thus early arising from the dreadful pressure of want. And

shall we deny that this visitation is the work of Him, in whose hand is the soul of every living thing? or must there be, as of old in the case of Egypt, judgment upon judgment, till our atheistical hearts, lost in the attempt to account for afflictions so severe, shall be at length compelled to acknowledge like those magicians, "*This is the finger of God.*" For how is the present affliction received? What is the temper of the public mind concerning it? It has furnished a problem for philosophers; a subject for chemical investigation; a fruitful topic for those who consider themselves sufficiently learned to advise; the weather-wise can trace it to the atmosphere or the nature of the season. The public prints have abounded with such effusions. Practical atheism has been hard at work. But there is only *one* theory which makes the problem simple. *It is the judgment of God; the visitation of the Most High.* As in time past, He has called for a famine upon the earth, and by it He calls upon the earth's inhabitants. And yet as we converse of it amongst ourselves, how few of us either feel it or speak of it in this view. God speaks, evidently speaks, and we do not regard it: but from one to another seeming to catch the spirit of public amazement, and the general method of demonstrating its cause, we fail to confess the visitation as of God, and know not the judgment of the Lord. We cannot then, my brethren, or rather we should not as a christian country, regard it in any other light than as a judicial act of God's sovereignty: such a silent manifestation of His will as He is wont to set forth in the exercise of His moral government. It is atheism to think of it, or to speak of it on any lower ground: for what is it indeed but a verification of the principle of God's dealing laid down by David, "a fruitful land He turneth into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein."

And if we acknowledge the hand of God in this public disaster, shall we doubt that the cause assigned by David is the one, which at the present time has excited the Divine judgment? It is true, that if the principle holds *anywhere*, it must hold *everywhere*: that as far as we can reason, if the abounding iniquity of one nation has called forth the exercise of divine wrath, there must be assigned the same reason for the exercise of that wrath on others; especially when the judgment is the same, and occurring at the same time. Let it be so, brethren. Let each nation discover and lament its own iniquity. It is sufficient for us and *well* for us, if we confess and bewail our own. Nor can such a cause for the divine judgment in itself be denied. It is true that we find in scripture mention made of famines for which no cause, or no such cause is assigned. There were famines in Palestine in the time of Abraham and of Isaac, and in Egypt in the days of Joseph; and we read not the why or the wherefore. But they were not the less the visitations of God. And since it is a settled maxim that God does nothing without a purpose, in these cases there was a reason for, and an end for which God thus wrought. We cannot then be led from such instances to say that God may thus visit without such a cause. The principle of David remains unshaken. It matters not whether we say that such a visitation be *judicial* or *cautionary*. In either case it is God who visits; and the abounding iniquity of those visited may be the exciting cause.

It remains then that we pursue this thought in the case of Christian England.

In the varied events which have marked her destiny over the face of the globe, the page of her history records a progressive though unequal advance to an eminence of glory and influence and power, unprecedented in the

annals of any nation in the world. Who is there that is not proud of his birthright as a native of the soil of Britain? Who is there that does not contemplate with feelings of pride the magnificent successes which have crowned her vast adventures? or who has not traced with glowing feelings of high admiration the foundation and growth of her colonial dependencies, the very limbs of her national power? or the splendid developement of her internal resources, which have extended her commercial empire to every nation of the globe? Thus has she risen to an eminence of renown and to a strength of power, which have made her policy respected, and her opposition feared. And if it be, as we suppose, that her rise to eminence and distinction is within the three past centuries of her history; to what, we may well ask, must her envied fame, her magnificent triumphs, her remarkable prosperity, her mighty influence be ascribed? We answer, and it is difficult to controvert the assertion, that, under God, our national eminence is entirely to be attributed to that, which has formed the distinctive feature of our national character, viz., *our Protestantism*:—Protestantism, not, as some would have it, *an undefined and unmeaning term*;—*not the mere negation of one species of error, but a declaration of truth*; of truth drawn in the purest form from the undefiled word of Him, who putteth down one and setteth up another. Nearly three centuries have elapsed since the light of God's truth was restored to these Islands; since to shake off the trammels of corruption, and to break the yoke of foreign ecclesiastical power, the nation roused itself to a vigorous effort; and not in vain. Then it was, as an able writer expresses it, that "the ark of God being without a shelter, this country was consecrated into its temple."* Then it was that the

* Dr. Croly.

cross became the brightest ornament of our national escutcheon. Then it was that England set herself forth as the witness and champion of God's truth. From that time her great advances in prosperity, and her rapid rise in power and influence, are to be dated. Not that her success has been uniform. It has been advancing : but that advance has been marked by an alternation of fortune, which is very remarkable. From the history of that period it will be seen, that just as the star of Protestantism grew dim, the fortunes and successes of the country declined and faded. That in proportion as she was unfaithful to the light vouchsafed her, and to the high and holy position which she had assumed, her foreign enterprise was unsuccessful, and tumult and faction interrupted her internal welfare. The public fortunes of the country in fact during that time, have formed a most striking parallel with her religious principles.* And is it unreasonable to believe, that as Israel of old was selected to the privileged guardianship of the truth of the Most High, so in the wisdom of the same Divine Being this country may have been fixed upon for the privileged preservation of Christianity? Certainly the Protestant nations of the earth look, or rather *did* look, to England as the guardian of pure Christianity ; and the very fact of the rise and fall of national prosperity being found in so wonderful a ratio to our faithfulness or unfaithfulness to truth, is a strong presumption in favour of the belief. It is impossible indeed, in glancing at the history of the past, to believe that so marked a succession of prosperity and

* Those who wish to see a proof of this, would do well to read a paper drawn up by the spirited pen of the Rev. G. Croly, I.L.D., and published some years ago by the Protestant Association under the Title of " England the Fortress of Christianity."

adversity as has followed the advance or decline of Christian truth, can be ascribed to any other cause, or be otherwise intended by an observant and jealous God, than as indications of His approval or displeasure.

And trace the history to our own times. The same manifestations of God's mind are visible: and the same principle of dealing must be applied. We must look at the present threatening affliction, my brethren, not as an accidental deviation from the accustomed order of events; but as the significant voice of God in the way of judgment and anger. Is there not a cause? Has the God of nations nothing against us? Is there no reason why the Almighty should enter into controversy with us? Is not the banner of truth, which our Reformers unfurled, and bore with a martyr's spirit to the death of victory, already partially beaten down by the steady perseverance and active zeal of the armies of error? Is there no grievous departure from that high standard of Protestant truth, to interweave which into our political constitution, and to embody it imperishably in our national confession, awakened the zeal and fired the ardent spirit of our forefathers? It is impossible, my brethren, if we feel, not to feel *deeply* on this subject. It is impossible to glance at the history of the past seventeen years, from which we may date our national defection, and not have painful apprehensions, that if thus yielding by little and little to the torrent of opposing error, we sacrifice principles, which have the pure Gospel for their basis:—that if thus, in short, we are wheedled out of the very life of our national glory; we cannot but entertain dark forebodings of the not very distant arrival of a day, when "Ichabod," the symbol of departed glory, may be written in melancholy characters upon institutions revered and held in times of no ordinary trial, and which came into our own hands

with all the burnish and beauty of their original foundation. The fortress has been too successfully attacked. From that calamitous year, in which was made the great inroad upon the Protestantism of our nation, it is impossible to deny that its internal peace has been grievously disturbed, and that its policy has wanted much of that vigour and decision, which have characterized other days. At home at least the God of nations has evidently had His hand upon us, and rebuked us sharply for our sad compromise of truth. Change has followed change. The first point yielded, the demand has become insatiable. Instead of starting back at the guilty step we have taken, and with sorrow for the past, thenceforward standing firm, concession has followed concession: and Protestantism, instead of being a definitive appellation, which once made the heart of the kingdom thrill with feelings of holy pride and conscious honour, will soon only be applied to us in the scorn of a haughty triumph and as a stigma upon our national weakness. What our Protestant forefathers abjured as error has been endowed by public act. As if in the present day, with the page of past history open before us, and in view of countries still fettered by a yoke from which we were once mercifully freed, it were a question again to be decided, "*What is truth?*" As if the present age, which claims to be so enlightened, in its spirit of jealous liberty, could deliberately sanction propositions, not only adverse to the word of God, but which contradict the senses and insult the reason. And where shall we stop? Who can predict the end of these things, or the rapidity with which we may be hurrying on to it? The battle is half won from us. At this moment our Protestant church in Ireland—Ireland so long afflicted with the blight of Roman superstition—is in peril of annihilation. Long,

through the vacillating councils of a degraded country, has she been kept in the furnace of trial: and soon it is to be feared, will she be known only in the memory of the past, unless the rekindled energies of slumbering Protestantism arise promptly to her help. But few steps in our downward course will then remain. A system of national education, which excludes not only *any* religious opinion as its base, but *all*—as if *Christian* education formed no part of the duty of a state—will be adopted as expedient to the temper of the times. And then the deliberate endowment of the priesthood of an apostate church, will surely fill up the measure of our iniquity, and make us ripe for the final judgment of our God.

We say, brethren, that God is visiting for these things; and that our national unfaithfulness to the cause of truth, is the wickedness, for which at this moment God is threatening to turn our fruitful land into barrenness. God elevated England in the scale of nations to be the fortress of Christianity. While she held fast the faith, she was watered with the dews of heaven. Successful measures crowned the policy of her councils; and an envied height of internal prosperity has been her inheritance from the Lord. But directly Protestant truth, the great bulwark of the state, was successfully assailed, the frown of Heaven rested upon us. A feeble resistance or easy concession have met the growing demands upon her scriptural constitution. She had a great trust, but like Israel of old, she has proved unfaithful to it; great privileges, but she *has* or *is* bartering them away; withal great responsibilities, but she has been guided rather by human policy, than a righteous acknowledgment of God. And now the very existence of revered institutions—nay, the whole constitution of our civil society is in danger, because rulers and councils, no longer influenced by Protestant

principles, are failing to fulfil their solemn and most important duties. "Whatever may be the lot of those to whom error has been an inheritance, woe be to the man and people to whom it is an adoption. If England, free above all other nations, sustained amidst the trials, which have covered Europe before her eyes with burning and slaughter, and enlightened by the fullest knowledge of divine truth, shall refuse fidelity to the compact, by which those matchless privileges have been given, her condemnation will not linger. . . . She has committed the capital error of mistaking that for a purely political question, which was a purely religious one. Her foot already hangs over the precipice. It must be retracted, or the empire is but a name."* "Our present affliction may be but "the beginning of sorrows:" one other messenger of God, sent, as to His people of old, to see what is in our hearts; another call from heaven to break up our national atheism, and to induce us in "weeping and mourning" to "consider our ways," and "turn to the Lord." Clouds of fiercer judgment may be even now gathering upon the horizon, and soon the desolating storm of newly-awakened fury may consign our name and glory to the oblivion of the past. Yes! failing to respond to the call of Heaven, the time may be determined, when the candlestick which has burnt so brightly, and given forth its light to the nations of the world, shall be removed; for "there is a God that ruleth in Jacob, and to the ends of the earth."†

And if such be our *danger*—danger which no Christian will underrate—what are our *duties*? In the literal language of Scripture, God hath killed our root with famine.‡ His judgments are upon us. Shall we in our

* Dr. Croly.

† Ps. lix. 13.

‡ Is. xiv. 30.

apathy and disregard answer the description of Hazor of old; be a nation "that dwelleth without care;"* in a carnal indifference to the dangers which surround us? Shall "God's judgments be in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world not learn righteousness?"† It is to be feared, that it will be so with ourselves. It is to be feared, that in our present day of peril, when all we love as Protestants is perishing from our hands, we shall still fail to rouse ourselves to the occasion; and be willing to sacrifice the great question upon which the vitality, the very existence of the country depends, to some measure of mere political economy, in comparison of absolute unimportance.

The day is near at hand, when the voice and choice of the country will be appealed to, in the formation of the strongest component part of its government. With the blessing of a monarchy, our constitution knows nothing of absolute monarchical power. Every legislative enactment must be sanctioned by the people, or it cannot be law. It remains then very much in our own hands, in the election of that representative power, which both checks the absoluteness of monarchical rule, and embodies the will of the people. My brethren, this is a privilege, which belongs to us. But let us remember that it is a *sacred* trust reposed in our hands, and to be used for the glory of God; and that the very possession of the privilege entails guilt in the abuse. The great question of the day, to the decision of which every elector will soon be called in the exercise of the sacred trust committed to his hands, is *not the regulation of a law, which affects the introduction or exclusion of foreign corn; but shall England give up her Protestantism? her national church?*

* Jer. xlix. 31.

† Is. xxvi. 9.

Shall she fling away what she yet retains of primitive Catholic truth, and admit that flood of error and superstition and idolatry from which she emerged at the time of the Reformation? Shall we, in fact, deliberately choose a system, which, in whatever country it is ascendant, holds that country in the thralldom of ignorance and in a species of civilised barbarism? The question of "the meat that perisheth" is trivial compared to this; just as man's temporal wants are insignificant when brought in contact with his eternal. Yet it seems to be the delusion, which is thickly spread over the mind of our social body, that this question should be preferred to the other. It is wholly secondary and subordinate. It is national as well as individual wisdom to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness;" and in wise and temperate and godly legislation to rest in the promise, that "all these things shall be added to us."

What then, we say, is our duty? To use the words of the same writer: "There are mighty means in sincerity: and if no miracle was ever wrought for the faithless and despairing, the country that will help itself; the generous, the high-hearted, and the pure, will never be left destitute of the help of Heaven." If we have the power to frame or sanction the measures, by which the country is to be ruled, let us use that power as in the sight of God. Let us seek to recover what is lost, and to amend the future; that the threatened desolation may be averted. *The destiny of the country depends upon it. It is ours to decide. Let us show that we are not ashamed of the Reformation; but that we still count its principles the dearest treasures of our hearts. Let us evince a determination to uphold in all their purity the Protestant institutions of the country: to have no representative, who will sanction the*

destruction of our own loved Church in Ireland, or endow the Church of Rome. Let us declare that we will have no tampering with Papal supremacy ; nor yield to the admission of ecclesiastical rule. Let us declare in our national assembly that we will maintain in all its integrity that branch of the Catholic Church established in these realms ; a church not true because established, but established because true. In a word, let us firmly set our faces against every approach to a system, favourable to ambitious views, and in its practices injurious to morality : a system, which conceals under a mass of fables the pure truths of the Gospel of Christ, and in interposing idols and phantoms between man and his Redeemer, derogates from His honour and deceives the souls of men. Then may it be in the mercy and relentings of God, that with*

* Those in our own Church at the present time who are *approaching* Rome, would do well to consider the forcible language of the present Bishop of Oxford, in a Charge delivered in 1844, when Archdeacon of Surrey : “ The causes which first severed our Church from Rome remain altogether unremoved. Those perilous corruptions of the highest truths, which forced our Reformers to come out from her as for their lives, continue still within her, and disfigure her communion. Surely the rule of circumspection and watchfulness should dictate to any one, whose mind was even moved upon these points, the bounden duty of keeping at the greatest distance possible from such delusion : of honestly remembering from the first the deep pollutions of faith and practice, of which Rome has plainly been convicted. From the first let such an one remember, that he who chooses her system must choose it altogether. She well knows how to lure on her victims, and promises them therefore, as their baits, doctrines modified and practices reformed. But once let them join themselves to her, and they will find that in all essential points, she is what she ever was ; and that they too, like the rest, must be bound by all the decrees of the Council of Trent, and believe without questioning all the creed of Pius IV.”

such a national symptom of repentance and faith, His hand may be recalled, and the judgments prepared for us be removed.

But at the present moment we must not rest as if the work of reparation were future. His hand is now pressing sore upon us. We feel it: and to-day again we have acknowledged it. Almost in the very words of our text, we have confessed unto Him, that He has "turned abundance into scarcity;"* and have besought Him to "withdraw the judgment, of which we are justly afraid." Thrice has our acknowledgment gone up to the throne of grace, that "by our strifes and divisions, our misuse of God's gifts, and our forgetfulness of His manifold mercies, we have justly deserved punishment." But I humbly ask, is this enough? Would it be sufficient for an individual thus suffering for sin under the wrath of God? Christian and holy as is the act, is it equal to the occasion? To the misuse of what gifts have we confessed; or what manifold mercies have we forgotten? I declare, brethren, that much as my mind might linger upon other blessings, I am carried to that great gift of God to our country, whereby he gave us to be a witness to the truth, and permitted all our institutions to be pervaded by its power. And His manifold mercies can be none other than that full cup of national prosperity, which has followed our national confession of faith, and which has poured its draught of sweetness and joy into the several ranks of our social body. I deeply feel that this gift we have misused, and these mercies we have forgotten. But is this thrice-repeated act of Sabbath supplication equal to such an acknowledgment? I confess that I look for something more: for some ac-

* Form of prayer drawn up for the occasion by Order of Council.

knowledge of the hand of God more deep and penitential. Should we not have a specific day of fasting and humiliation? a day on which the nation should appear before God, prostrate for its guilt: a day on which the solemn dirge of our sorrow and sadness should ascend before the Throne of grace: a day consecrated to this end; when we could meet in this house with abstracted hearts to bewail our iniquity—meekly to submit to His chastisement—and implore His mercy—with such sincerity that the future shall find us using this gift aright, and having a due remembrance of His manifold mercies. I am convinced that I am not singular in looking for the consecration of such a day to such a purpose: nor if disappointed in this expectation, should I feel wrong in inviting you to the observance of some specific day.

But in the mean time, brethren, it becomes us to exercise in all our concerns the strictest self-denial, in order that when the suffering of millions demand our sympathy, we may be ready to give with a willing mind from our abundance. This duty is concurrent with, or rather emanative from, the other. God, in the way of His dealing, would make each of us instrumental in the administration of His mercy. To bear one another's burdens is to fulfil the law of Christ. If God's judgments may not be removed, it is not sinful to seek to alleviate them. Nay, if all are partakers of the same sin, all should seek to bear their proportion of the punishment; lest the cry of the afflicted go up to God, and the withering blight of His curse descend upon that hoarded affluence, which refuseth pity to him that needeth. To-day indeed such a call is made upon us.* Though the broad

* Collection in aid of the sufferers by the recent fires at St. John's, Newfoundland.

sea flows between us and the destitute, they are not the less just in their expectation of sympathy and aid. Though not inhabitants of our soil, they claim a national brotherhood, and look for the kindness and mercy of fellow subjects. And how grievous are their sufferings! How awful their visitation! Not a single calamity, but a succession of troubles. A destructive fire left thousands houseless, and consumed their property: and now a desolating storm has burst with its sad work of ruin upon the small remainder. Oh! let us rise with a spirit of high generosity to their aid; remembering how soon the severe pressure of God's judgment upon ourselves may make us value even the smallest portion of human kindness. Unblest indeed must be that man, who can shut his hand in cold apathy upon such an occasion; and unfaithful indeed must be that Christian heart, which in such a cause, and even with such an uncertain future, cannot confide in the truth, that "he that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord."*

These judgments and visitations—these seasons of clouds and darkness—these evident tokens of the Almighty's dealings, should make us stand in solemn reflection in the midst of the avocations of our daily life. For myself, I would not be an enthusiast beyond Scripture. But I confess that when I hear the Son of God predicting, that before the great and terrible day of His return to judgment, "there shall be *famines*, pestilencies, and earthquakes in divers places,"† I see much in the signs of the times, which forces the conviction upon my mind that we are hurrying on to that determined period. Many things indeed of marked importance are declared for previous accomplishment: but who can tell with what

* Prov. xix. 17.

† Matt. xxiv. 7.

rapid speed those several events may fall in? The times are undoubtedly most perilous. There seems to be a shaking of the nations, and a feverish inclination to universal discord, which the wisest measures of human policy can scarce allay. Shall we, my brethren, not mark these things? Shall every providence of God, and every sign of the times, be met by the sneer of infidelity or our more besotted worldliness? We repeat it; the *present* judgment may be *cautionary* and *merciful*: but a judgment, which in Scripture language “shall make both the ears of every one who hears it tingle,”* may be “at hand to come.” At least every Christian heart must feel that these are *sifting* times: times in which the sincerity of the Lord’s people is sorely tried: “days of darkness and gloominess, of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains,”† when the duty of secret intercession with God is eminently incumbent, and a privilege at such a time of a more than ordinary calming and strengthening nature. Surely, beloved brethren, if “the Lord has come out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity”‡ the very raising of that Sovereign arm should lead you to your secret chambers. “Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself for a little moment, ‘until this indignation be overpast.§

May the spirit indeed be poured out upon us from on high: that “rending our hearts and not our garments, we may turn unto the Lord our God.” And who can tell that the uplifted hand may not yet be stayed; and that our receding glory may not yet return to us with a fresh accession of heaven-imparted excellence? Who can

* 1 Saml. iii. 11. † Joel ii. 2. ‡ Is. xxvi. 21. § Is. xxvi. 20.

say, that if yet faithful as a witness and champion of the truth of God, Christian England may not be used as the mighty accomplisher of God's Omnipotent purposes : that our children's children may not bask in the rays of pure undefiled truth ; and that, rebuilt by a nation's inspired and determined zeal, the falling glory of the constitution may not yet stand forth in richer and richer beauty ? That so from generation to generation, till God's will is complete, the Saviour honoured :—His Gospel preached,—His truth maintained,—His peace, which passeth all understanding, may cheer the living hours, and solace the dying moments of thousands and thousands, who in successive years shall crowd the house in which we now are gathered. And this so from north to south and from east to west of our country's limits, that a covenant God, the merciful, the good, the long-suffering, the gracious, shall take pleasure in dwelling among us.

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